

MENTAL HEALTH LOCAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

September 14, 2009 - MINUTES

In attendance: Council Members: Jacob Wagner, Tom Peluso, Kathy Berg, Jerry Johnson, Jan Bjork, John Watson, Lori Marchak, Charlotte Kress, Eric Bryson, Betsy Garrigues, Commissioner Bill Murdock;; Advocacy Members: Scott Malloy (GMC), Dennis Cox (AMDD), and Diane Conti (Help Center). Guests: Gerry Higgins, Nikki Rorabaugh (MSU, Hope House, Help Center), Sunny Rae Yocom (GMC) and Pierre Martineau (West Yellowstone); and Staff: Glenda Howze.

Call to Order and Introductions - 12:05 PM.

Public Comment - There was no public comment.

Approval of Minutes (August 10, 2009) - Ms. Kress pointed out the misspelling of Mr. Gerry Higgins name. This will be corrected. Ms. Marchak made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Ms. Bjork seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion with Homeless Outreach Worker Sunny Rae Yocom regarding the PATH Program - Ms. Yocom explained that she is a PATH (Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness) case manager. The PATH program is a federal grant program that goes through AMDD to the local areas. To be a client in the program one has to have mental illness, be homeless and not already have been a receiver of social services (Medicaid, etc.). Commissioner Murdock asked if there were any statistics available to say how many homeless people also have mental illness. Ms. Yocom stated that there has been a lot of research done on this but there are a lot of conflicting reports. She stated that nationally the ratio appears to be fairly low but locally it is likely much higher. The Continuity of Care Coalition did a Point in Time survey in January but the results are not available yet. Commissioner Murdock indicated that he'd like to see the numbers when they are available. Mr. Watson stated that he is seeing more and more homeless at the Drop-In Center but they are a very transient population and many don't stay around long. Ms. Yocom stated that because of the stigma of mental illness a lot of time those being questioned or surveyed won't admit to having a mental illness. The numbers reported and actual numbers are likely very different. Mr. Johnson asked if we can assume that the homeless know about all of the resources available to them such as the Drop-In Center. Ms. Yocom stated that most are aware. Ms. Bjork asked Ms. Yocom how she makes her contacts. Ms. Yocom explained that she gets referrals through the Drop-In Center, housing services, word of mouth, other agency referrals, and has even approached people on the street corners. The grant would like her to go into their encampments but she feels this is unsafe and potentially offensive. Ms. Yocom presented a Project Homeless Connect project/event that is scheduled for September 19th. This event will offer free services, assistance, food and drink to homeless in our community and attempt to get them connected to services that they may need. Ms. Marchak asked how many homeless that Ms. Yocom would estimate in our community. Ms. Yocom stated that 105 came through the door at the 1st such events a year ago and they are anticipating twice that many. She also explained that PATH is very restrictive with its parameters for who is served through their program but she works to facilitate services for everyone where she is able.

Discussion took place about the homeless during the cold months. Ms. Yocom stated that there are probably 25% of those in our community that are permanently, year-round homeless and stay here. They are also the hardest to serve because they don't necessarily want to change their situation. Mr. Peluso asked about homeless teenagers. Ms. Yocom explained that the PATH program is an adult program but that she will talk to

youth and give them some direction if they come to her. She also noted that there is a shelter for homeless teens opening up soon. Many teens without homes "couch-surf" and thus are not considered homeless. The true definition of homeless indicates that they must be sleeping outside or in a car. Mr. Watson gave praise for the PATH program and Ms. Yocom. He noted that they have pictures of one individual who was originally on a corner with a sign, came into the Drop-In Center, was put in touch with the PATH program and now has an apartment and a job and is very proud of this new status.

Mr. Johnson asked about the number of those that are homeless choose to be so. Ms. Yocom stated that the Point in Time survey will probably have some good numbers on this. Many do choose this life, but there are many more homeless now who have lost their jobs and their homes and some even their families.

Chairman Wagner asked Ms. Yocom about the difference between her work with the developmentally disabled and mentally ill consumers. She explained that the developmentally disabled (D.D.) have a lot less stigma, a lot more acceptance, more support and are more willing to accept help and support. The mentally ill don't want the stigma and often don't want the support. Chairman Wagner stated that he has seen a lot of the D.D. clients at the mental health center as well. He also noted that the D.D. group tends to be a lot more successful at the legislature.

Mr. Watson stated that Jacob comes in and gives haircuts and that recently he (John) changed the policy on the TV and it is not turned on until 4PM, which has lessened the homeless visits. Chairman Wagner stated that he appreciates that John has made the center one where people are going to grow and learn rather than just sitting around watching TV all day.

Discussion Regarding One Book One Bozeman - Ms. Bjork explained the One Book One Bozeman program and stated that this year's book, *The Soloist*, will bring a lot of attention to the homeless and mentally ill. The Bozeman Library chooses a different book each year and encourages everyone in the community to read it, which then allows for a common dialog. Mr. Malloy is part of a panel discussion tonight on homelessness to be held at MSU. Ms. Kress noted that no one from the LAC group was behind this book being chosen, so others in the community are beginning to take notice of the problems that we've all been aware of. Ms. Yocom also explained that this book and the events surrounding it have been in the making for a year and the author coming last week was the culmination of the events.

Drop-In Center Update - Mr. Watson explained that he is also a peer and that he has recently experienced a relapse himself. He is not getting back in to things and recognizes that his own issues help others to trust him and realize that he does know what he is talking about. While John was gone there were 568 people through the door. He estimates a core of about 45 people, but that core does change on occasion. The Center did lose a peer support specialist but a replacement has been hired and will start in the near future. The replacement has a lot of good ideas and was hired because of them. Mr. Watson reported that he will be doing a 1.5 hour training this afternoon on Illness Management and Recovery (IMR). He also recently went to a training that offered no new information but did pull all of the previously learned information together into an organized fashion. The group that John offers at the center is a closed group that is slowly working through the steps. Another peer offers an open group as well. Ms. Yocom stated that during John's absence the regulars at the Center were very worried about him and the volunteers really stepped in and picked up the pieces. This says a lot about John and the way he has managed the Center. Mr. Peluso asked if the regulars at the Center are hooked up with services. Mr. Watson stated that 99% of time they are. He said that the thing he feels is most needed in Bozeman is a Rehabilitation Center for alcoholics. He hopes that after the Hope

House is complete that the next major project will be a rehab facility. Ms. Yocom stated that ADSGC is working on this. She also noted that the Amos House is 7 days in, 30 days out and is only 8 beds.

Agency Reports including Campus Update - NAMI: Chairman Wagner reported on the NAMI Walk in Helena in October (actually September 27th). They are in need of sponsors for the walk and people who are walking can collect pledges or individuals can simply donate to the walk through NAMI. Forms for the walk and donations are available on the NAMI website. They have been able to hire an Executive Director for the walk which has relieved a lot of stress on those that had to take care of all the nuts and bolts in the past. West Yellowstone Services: Mayor Martineau reported that with the help of Scott Malloy and Adina Smith the West Yellowstone community is getting stuff done. They are working on the clinic and trying to get some mental health services in place there. They have the need and are working on making progress to meet those needs. West has a large transient population, many of whom don't know how they got to this community, why they are there or where they are going.

Other - Mr. Peluso made a motion to reschedule the October meeting to October 26th due to the holiday on October 12th. Mr. Watson seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 1:20 PM